

IN RECOGNITION OF “MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK ”

WHEREAS, The strongest weapon in the fight against mental illness is science. During the past decade, a wide array of effective new medications for severe mental illness has been developed. Genetic discoveries and progressive brain research continue moving us one step closer to sound medical answers for living with, and perhaps one day even curing or preventing, severe mental illnesses; and

WHEREAS, A new perception of mental illness is emerging – one that focuses on early intervention, effective treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery. No area of health care is changing more than mental health. Advances are prompted by better science and more research, the information revolution, the important role consumers play in advocating for themselves, and family members who speak out for their loved ones; and

WHEREAS, Barriers to mental illness recovery are falling one by one. More than 30 states have adopted measures to ensure health insurance parity. In addition, PACT (Program for Assertive Community Treatment) a 24-hour a day, seven days a week mobile service program for persons with the most severe mental illnesses, is being replicated in communities throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, Treatment works – if a person with a mental illness can get it. Science has greatly expanded our understanding and treatment of severe mental illnesses. Once forgotten in the back wards of mental institutions, individuals with these disorders have a real chance at reclaiming full and productive lives, but only if they have access to the treatments, services, and programs so vital to recovery; and

WHEREAS, The nation’s mental healthcare system is in crisis. Despite the tremendous strides in the fight against mental illness, far too many still struggle to get treatments and service we know are critical to recovery. The system denies access to the latest medications and limits funding for essential programs. The results have been disastrous. Persons with mental illness are dying in restraints on hospital wards. They are committing suicide, being shot by police or warehoused in prison, discriminated against in the workplace or living wasted, isolated lives, unnoticed by anyone, when they could again become part of their communities; and

WHEREAS, Research on mental illness is significantly underfunded in relation to its economic and public health impact. Depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and obsessive-compulsive disorder account for an estimated 20 percent of the world’s total disability resulting from all diseases and injuries. Yet for every U. S. taxpayer dollar spent on medical research, less than one cent is allocated to schizophrenia, one of the most disabling mental illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Stigma continues to be the single most significant barrier to people getting the help they need. As underscored by the U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher in his 1999 landmark report on mental health, stigma toward mental illness remains a pervasive and potentially lethal barrier to mental illness recovery.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bob Young, Mayor of the City of Augusta, do hereby proclaim October 6 through 12, 2003 as “MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK” in Augusta, Georgia, to increase public awareness of severe mental illness and to promote greater understanding for those who suffer from the potentially disabling symptoms of these disorders.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of Augusta, Georgia to be affixed this 6th day of October 2003.